

# Over 1,000 Attend Regional Suicide Prevention Conferences

An estimated 1,000 people attended Suicide Prevention Workshops around the state this spring. The conferences were a product of the regional Suicide Prevention Action Groups (SPAG) and sponsored by the DMHDD and Janssen Pharmaceutica along with many other companies.

## Region I

Region I's conferees heard from Jon Ellis, Ph.D., Department of Psychology at East Tennessee State University about "The Problem: Epidemiology, Assessment and Treatment." The conference was held at Meadowlake Center in Kingsport on May 11.

The program included panel discussions about Generations at Risk with community responses. Fred Davis, president and executive director of TEACH/Crisis Center, Clyde, N.C., spoke about "Parents against Teen Suicide. Breakout groups included Survivors Panel, Standardized Patients, and Suicide and the Law.

## Region II

"Is Suicide Preventable" was the theme of the conference at the Knoxville Holiday Inn/Cedar Bluff Road on May 11. Hosted by the Region II SPAG and the Mental Health Association of Greater Knoxville, it was sponsored by Janssen Pharmaceutica, Forest Specialty Sales, Pfizer and the DMHDD.

Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser gave the opening address, followed by presentations by Stephanie Hall, M.D., chief public health officer of Knox County Health Department and Carter Miller, Ph.D. of Cherokee Health Systems.

## Region III

DMHDD's Larry Thompson, Ph.D., welcomed the group to the session entitled



*State Suicide Prevention Coordinator Janice Browne pictured in front of the quilt featuring those lost to suicide.*



*Regions IV and V speakers Reese Butler and Karen Marshall.*

"Suicide: The Unnecessary Loss," followed by the keynote address by Terry Holmes, M.D., a physician in private practice in Chattanooga.

Three morning breakout sessions were age specific—children and youth, middle-aged adults and a geriatric panel.

A faith-based panel offered a diverse look. It featured Phil Summerlin, chaplain at the Erlanger Medical Center (moderator); Rev. Lamat Moore of Lookout Valley Baptist Church; Rabbi Philip Posner of the Mitzpah Congregation and Ven Tenzin Tharpa, Buddhist Monk, Bodhi Center of Chattanooga.

Another panel was Survivors, Attempters and Grief Issues featuring Janice Browne as moderator with Carla Goette, Tim Arnett and Cynthia Bragg.

## Regions IV and V

Belmont University's Massey Business center was the site for the conference in Nashville entitled "Is Suicide Preventable?"

Over 250 turned out to hear such speakers as:

Reese Butler—founder of the National Hopeline Network and the Kristen Brooks Hope Center named after Reese's late wife, who committed suicide after a long struggle with bipolar disorder.

Karen Marshall—an award-winning journalist—works at the

Kristen Brooks Center.

Dr. Elizabeth Prichett—board certified in adult and child psychiatry.

Dr. Joyce Maar—a licensed professional counselor.

Rev. Edwin Sanders II—a leading professional in faith-based initiatives and HIV/AIDS and founder of the Metropolitan Interdenominational Church.

Clark Flatt—president and CEO of the Jason Foundation, an organization begun after the tragic suicide of the founder's son.

Dr. Kevin Early—criminologist and associate professor of sociology at Oakland University in Rochester.

## Regions VI and VII

Held at the Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, the conference targeted Religion and Suicide with a theme of "Saving Lives."

Dr. James Clemons, president of Oasis, the Organization for Attempters and Survivors of Suicide in Interfaith Services of Washington, D.C., addressed "What Does the Bible Say About Suicide?"

Madge and Ken Tullis moderated "Faith Groups Speak Out on Suicide" featuring Father Tom Condon of St. Peter's Catholic Church; Rabbi Micah Greenstein of Temple Israel; Rev. Thomas Murray of the Anointed Temple of Praise, Rev. Dr. Janice Mynchenburg of St. Luke's Lutheran Church and Dr. Michael Smith of Second Baptist Church. A host of panel presentations followed.